

Fedeli slams Liberal 're-election budget'; Provincial minister says carbon pricing plan will increase gas, energy costs

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Body

Too little, too late.

That's the verdict from Queen's Park about the federal Liberal government's pre-election spending plan.

Finance Minister Vic Fedeli, who will table the Progressive Conservatives' first budget on April 11, said federal Finance Minister Bill Morneau's fiscal blueprint falls short.

"This is nothing more than a re-election budget," Fedeli told reporters Tuesday, decrying Morneau's "endless deficits" while continuing to shortchange Ontario, which contributes \$12.9 billion more to Ottawa than it receives back in services and transfers.

"And I know that when (federal Conservative Leader) Andrew Scheer wins the fall election, they will inherit the same issues that we have inherited here in Ontario," he said, referring to Premier Doug Ford's victory last June over former premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberals.

"I know that they will work as hard for the people of Canada as we are working for the people of Ontario," he said.

"We look at the devastation that was caused by the provincial Liberals and I'm seeing a mirror image here with the federal Liberals."

The provincial Tories and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's federal Liberals have been almost constantly at odds since Ford took office nine months ago.

Fedeli noted Ottawa's carbon-pricing plan that takes effect April 1 will lead to higher gasoline and energy costs.

But the federal government will offer payouts designed to offset the costs of the plan. The payouts mean an average family of four in Ontario will receive "around \$300" from Ottawa in 2019, an amount that exceeds the expected \$240 cost increases.

These "climate action incentives," will grow to \$718 for a four-person household in 2022, as the carbon tax increases and the government expects average annual costs for a family of four to hit \$564.

The increase in energy costs will essentially wipe out any savings realized by the Tories' cancellation last summer of Ontario's cap-and-trade environmental alliance with Quebec and California that was designed to reduce carbon emissions that contribute to climate change.

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"Think about what that is going to do for our families - the price of gasoline is going to go up 4.4 cents (per litre) ... on its way to an 11.1 cent increase by 2020," he said.

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